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**Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow,
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Sergey Lavrov's upcoming meeting with ambassadors of CIS member states

On December 12, 2022, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will hold a traditional meeting with the ambassadors of the CIS member states in Moscow.

The Minister will sum up the results of interaction with the Commonwealth countries in the outgoing year, outline the priority areas for our country in the future, and brief the ambassadors on the Russian position on a number of current international and regional topics.

Sergey Lavrov's participation in The Eurasian Choice as a Basis for Strengthening Sovereignty conference

On December 14, 2022, Sergey Lavrov is scheduled to participate in an international inter-party conference, The Eurasian Choice as a Basis for Strengthening Sovereignty, organised by the United Russia political party.

Delegations of the leading parliamentary parties of the CIS countries, Russian senators, State Duma deputies, and representatives of the academic and expert communities will take part in the conference.

The participants will discuss a wide range of current issues on the international agenda, as well as prospects for strengthening interstate dialogue and integration processes in the Eurasian space.

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel's interview with Die Zeit

On December 7, 2022, Die Zeit published a "revelation" that may serve as a good starting point for today's briefing.

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was in power for over 16

years, took a direct part in the Normandy format meetings and the process of drafting the Minsk agreements. Now she has shared her views on what Berlin really thought at that time and its position in this respect.

Ms Merkel said, “The 2014 Minsk agreements (I think she meant the 2015 Minsk agreements) were aimed at giving Ukraine time. It used this time to grow stronger, as we can see today. Ukraine in 2014-2015 was not what it is today. As you could see during hostilities in the area of Debaltsevo in early 2015, Russia could easily have taken it. I doubt that at that time, the NATO countries could have done as much as they are doing now to help Ukraine. All of us understood that this was a frozen conflict and that the problem would not be resolved then. This is why Ukraine received this important extra time.”

This is not just a revelation or a memory but a confession that was expressed clearly for the first time. Yes, the Kiev regime has recently said, more than once, that it was not planning to fulfil the Minsk agreements, but the West... the countries and their leaders, that took part in the Normandy format, have never been so explicit about this. Now we have a confession by a person, a leader and the head of the country that had enormous influence on the political turmoil in “sovereign” Ukraine. These politicians manually led many political processes, including the change of power in Ukraine. This confession was made by a person in the depths of whose system the Ukrainian elite were formed – the elite that “created the history” of modern Ukraine, or, on the contrary, the anti-history. This is the same state and the same leader that was handing out residence permits, passports and other “blessings” to those whom they either sent to Ukraine or recruited there to pursue their policy.

Now, we have seen the confession of a leader on everything that was drafted and presented to the world as an agreement; that had become part of international law as a UN Security Council resolution that is binding for every state (for all states rather than just the Normandy format members or the Kiev regime alone). This revelation has thrown light on the main point – in the West’s view, all this was a falsification, a manipulation of international law with the express goal of pumping Ukraine full of arms. It was designed to divert the international community from the real events happening on Ukrainian territory, the humanitarian catastrophe and the endless murders that exceeded 13,000 on both sides by 2022. The only purpose was to pump the Kiev regime with arms and to prepare politically for the start of hostilities that we saw in early 2022 when the Kiev regime started carrying out its deadly attacks at Donbass. This did not leave room for any alternative for the Russian Federation – the recognition of these territories as sovereign republics and then adoption by

Russia to make them truly protected, to allow them to save lives. These actions were demonstrated to the world via international law and the available mechanisms.

This revelation by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel points to terrible things: forgery (as a Western method of action), machinations, manipulations and every kind of distortion of the law that you can imagine. Back in 2015, they talked for hours, knowing that they would never fulfil any of it, and would pump the Kiev regime full of arms. They did not feel sorry for anyone – the women or children, Donbass civilians and Ukraine as a whole. They needed a conflict. They were ready for it as early as in 2015.

Now much is being said about a legal assessment of what is happening in Ukraine – tribunals and the like. Meanwhile, what I have just described is a specific application for a tribunal. What Merkel said in her interview is the testimony of a person who said directly that everything done in 2014-2015 had only one purpose – to divert the international community from the real problems, to drag time out, to fill Ukraine with arms and to bring all this to a full conflict. This is evidence.

Without using any legal mechanism, we received priceless evidence of what we had been talking about for years. This was Western falsification and criminal provocation. At first, this resulted in the creation of a new Ukrainian political elite that had nothing to do with the national interests of Ukraine. This elite was working in a contrary direction – against the aspirations of the Ukrainians.

The main goal was to create a hotbed of tensions in the region. This was followed by a change in regime even though the people of Ukraine had already made the choice they wanted. The West swept away the legally elected presidents and brought to power its puppets – Viktor Yushchenko, Pyotr Poroshenko and finally, “the bloody, bunker” Vladimir Zelensky. They were planning for a major conflict.

Ukraine crisis

On December 4, 2022, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland visited Kiev. Nobody is surprised that the US handlers routinely make inspection visits to Ukraine. They come to see if the flames are still burning or if more fuel should be poured on them. They simply need to return to the scene of the crime.

We have not forgotten that Victoria Nuland was closely associated with

the Euromaidan, which was presented to the international community as a democratic process. In fact, it was a state coup financed and orchestrated by the West and with Ukrainian politicians on its payroll. The leading force was the United States, and the European countries and local political forces acted in tune with Washington.

We all remember the 2013 footage of Victoria Nuland handing out cookies in central Kiev. She keeps saying that they were not cookies but buns. Whatever it was, Nuland was handing out poison to the Ukrainian people, possibly a time-release poison, which started the processes that have led to the current situation. Back then, Washington openly interfered in internal affairs and manually controlled public protests in Ukraine.

I would like to remind you that Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt openly discussed the format of the future cabinet of a “sovereign” Ukraine. Nuland was the harbinger of the tragic events to which the Washington-orchestrated bloody Nazi putsch has led.

It is no accident that she has come to Kiev now, when differences over the distribution of Western aid are growing among the Ukrainian ruling class. It won't come as a surprise if they are hatching yet another palace coup or a reshuffling. The Zelensky regime, which has been testing Washington's patience, has plenty to think about.

Washington doesn't care who holds power in Kiev, and it never did. The United States is controlling Ukraine, which it views as an instrument for attaining its own geopolitical interests in its confrontation with Russia. Even the American media are reporting with relish the details of that endless corruption marathon running via the White House to Ukraine and back. This explains the Biden administration's efforts to convince Congress to include a \$37 billion aid package for Kiev, most of which will be spent on the Ukrainian Armed Forces, in the 2023 budget. They will divide the money later, giving some to American ultra-liberals and European or global banks and private funds, and deciding how much will be used to buy weapons. But this will take place later.

This is also the logic of the three-year \$1.2 billion contract the US authorities signed with Raytheon in late November for the purchase of NASAMS surface-to-air missile systems.

In other words, Washington plans to continue pouring fuel on the fire in Ukraine at least until the end of 2025. This is their plan, which is clear from available documents and which they make no secret of. It overturns the statement Zelensky made yesterday to the effect that everything would be fine, and peace would be restored in 2023. Show these documents to his team on

Bankovaya Street. Washington has different plans. There's still a lot of money to be divided and distributed. Tell the gang leader on Bankovaya Street about the scenario that runs into 2025. Maybe this will help him understand what is going on.

The EU is trying to keep pace with the US. On December 3, Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, visited the EUMAM, Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine in Poland. In 2013-2014, we reported that Poland and the Baltics were training fighters for Ukraine, but nobody believed us. We were told that they were ordinary people with Molotov cocktails, who were brought to Kreshchatik in lorries. We were told that they were ordinary workers who did not like what the central authorities were doing, ordinary people who were expressing themselves through protest, not an organised movement, and that there certainly were no specially trained enforcers or fighters.

We provided detailed information. There were camps in Poland where those thugs and nationalists were trained to act as the driving force in those coups. The West is now conducting such training openly and under the same scenarios. Back then, they were trained to fight against their own citizens in Ukraine. You remember that Molotov cocktails were thrown not at the "Russian armed forces" but at Ukrainian citizens. The international community did not comment. Many people believed Washington, which said that it was part of the democratic transformation.

We argued that it was not an element of democratic transformations but part of a controlled state coup that was being implemented by the nationalists who had been trained in Poland and the Baltics. The West is now training them at the same camps but openly. The first group of 15,000 "cadets" have started training. By sending weapons and money to the Kiev regime and by training its soldiers, the EU is turning from a political and economic union into a paramilitary organisation that is fuelling the conflict in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the West is oblivious to the Ukrainian army and foreign mercenaries using the Western-supplied weapons to shell civilian targets on Russia's territory on a daily basis. In the DPR and LPR, in the Kherson, Zaporozhye, Belgorod, Kursk, and Bryansk regions, they are targeting residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and kindergartens. Remember the uproar in the Western media in February and March of this year over certain footage (which was mostly staged, as it turned out later), and some Russian shells allegedly hitting civilian facilities, hospitals and maternity hospitals?

I wonder if the Western media have a list of “right” and “wrong” maternity hospitals. Apparently, some can be targeted but others cannot. Do they have a list? If a maternity hospital is in Donbass, I’d assume it’s one of the wrong ones. An attack can go unnoticed. Apparently, the women in labour and newborns there are of the wrong nationality, or cultural affiliation, or ethnic group. But if the hospital is the right one (judging by the maps or geolocation), that is, controlled by the Kiev regime, and if at least a fragment lands there, this immediately creates a stir and gets attention. There has to be some logic to this after all. Civilians, including children, are being killed and injured. The targets are actually being chosen by the Westerners. There was an official statement by the Kiev regime saying that all targets were coordinated directly with the United States. Let me remind you that the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant is being subjected to massive shelling by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Unlike this, the Russian Armed Forces are targeting military facilities and defence or dual use infrastructure. We have repeatedly warned the Western countries that any weapons they supply automatically become legitimate targets on the territory of Ukraine.

The Kiev regime has unleashed a real terror against civilians amid the continued hostilities – this is totalitarianism at its finest. When the Russian troops pulled out of Kherson, Ukrainian neo-Nazis launched a repressive campaign against the local population. Forget our statements – there are videos gruesome enough to horrify even Western public figures. There has been a massive wave of “filtration” and extrajudicial killings. In mid-November, the “head of the Kherson military-civil administration” appointed by Vladimir Zelensky called on the military to “shoot traitors like dogs.” Her words were heard. The SBU security service shot Kirill Rashin, head of the pre-trial detention centre, without a trial or investigation.

According to more recent reports, a squad of Polish special services and army officers dressed in Ukrainian uniforms has been sent to Marganets, Dnepropetrovsk Region, to identify local residents who are sympathetic to Russia. I don't understand why they should be wearing Ukrainian uniforms then. Aren't you proud of what you're doing? You're supplying weapons and spending money on this, and helping develop strategies on the ground (I am now addressing Warsaw). Why can't your people wear their Polish uniforms, for the whole world to see? Why are you hiding behind this Ukrainian camouflage? Walk with your head held high! Let the whole world see your people there and know who is implicated in these massacres.

The Ukrainian authorities have deployed a full-blown repressive machine

in many regions of the country as part of their misanthropic policy. Any criticism of the regime is viewed in a totalitarian context. People face treason and collaboration charges. Moreover, the Kiev regime is escalating, as if inciting hatred on its own territory wasn't enough.

According to reports, a private law firm in Lvov has launched a service called Turn Over a Moskal. I see it as an ideological upgrade on the Mirotvorets website. As if what they had been doing wasn't enough. They're escalating. The purpose of this project is to "legally cleanse Europe of potential invaders." This is the Third Reich all over again – to cleanse Europe, aka the best part of humanity, from the "genetically impure." This has been described before – the ideology of fascists, nationalists and Nazis at its finest. We have already been there. Users of this website are encouraged to report Russian citizens living in European countries and send their information to the relevant authorities in those countries. The question is: what kind of democracy or freedom is this, with the worst practices used by dictatorships now being legalised in the territory controlled by the Kiev regime?

On the other hand, this may actually be something new. This is probably news for anyone who has never heard about the people who were burned alive in the House of Trade Unions in Odessa; who has no idea about the Mirotvorets website; or anyone who is unaware that people get shot in the centre of Kiev and other Ukrainian cities for expressing their opinion or a different view of the situation. Perhaps this is news for them if they have never heard of any of it.

Not for us. We are not just aware of this, but we have been sounding alarm for eight years. We point out that this logic is now enshrined at the legislative level, in the piles of laws and by-laws churned out by the Kiev regime. Until recently, this was practiced by some marginal groups that acted outside the law. They were difficult to track down, and even when they were, they got reprimanded and released, or court cases fell apart before our eyes. Today, what was tested for eight years has been elevated to the status of a law. This has taken the form of legal action.

The mind warp of the Nazis controlled by the Kiev regime reached a stage where a clinic in Lvov offers DNA testing for Muscovite genes. Anyone can pay \$175 to check if they have non-Ukrainian "impurities." Does this mean that there are Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian genes, and you can establish this by taking a DNA test? Unlike what happened in the centre of Europe 80 years ago, today's monsters have the technical capabilities to do this. They have the internet and DNA testing to check for "Muscovite genes," weapons, huge funds, Washington's support and its information and political instruments. If an end is

not put to this, we will see a disaster of untold proportions.

The Kiev regime consists of persons on the Western payroll who don't care where they live. There are no values they will not sell or pawn on order from the White House, for example. In keeping with the worst traditions of the proponents of the terrorist ideology, they have seized the bulk of the country's territory, which claimed to be a sovereign state, and are running the European show. This is mayhem.

Some people will say that this an isolated incident that took place in a crazy clinic. No, it is an example of the ideology that is connected with the situation on the ground and is encouraged by lawmakers. This is not an isolated group of people but a system that has been put on the nationalist wheels. In 2021, the Law on the Indigenous Peoples was adopted in Ukraine. DNA testing for "impurities" is part of that law's implementation. What next? Will they build ghettos for Russians, Jews and Greeks? Will it come to that? Will they do this to people with "impure" genes?

Another step towards the revival of Nazism was a recent ruling by the Ukrainian Supreme Court that the symbols of the SS Division Galicia are not Nazi. Who are you trying to deceive? This is open disregard for the decisions of the Nuremberg Trials, which recognised all the symbols of the Third Reich and Waffen SS as criminal. The Galicia Division is not a symbolic name but part of Waffen SS. The SS symbols were condemned in Nuremberg, but the Supreme Court of Ukraine decided that they are not Nazi. And nobody has seen any contradiction in that. All is well, even though Nazi symbols are prohibited in Ukraine. What are Nazi symbols if the SS symbols are not regarded as Nazi? Who committed all those crimes and implemented the Nazi ideology? This was above all done by SS units.

Of course, Washington, Brussels and public and international organisations are taking time to provide an assessment of the berserk nationalists' activities in Ukraine. This tactic is encouraging them to act ever more brazenly, reinforcing their belief that they will go unpunished, drawing out the conflict and increasing the number of casualties.

It is shocking that some people say a situation must be created where Russia will be driven into a corner. It's not Russia you are driving into a corner but the whole world. This is obvious. An attempt to drive one-sixth of the world into a corner will definitely and unquestionably push the world towards a disaster of untold proportions.

Washington's attempts to shift responsibility for the global food

crisis to Russia, as well as the multiplying insinuations in the US media about our country allegedly stealing Ukrainian grain

We took note of an article written in the detective genre by the Wall Street Journal accusing Russia of “stealing” agricultural produce in the “occupied territories.” According to its authors, the “stolen” food is delivered by trucks to Crimea, from where it is shipped by sea to the Middle East. Allegedly, transshipment is used to “cover up the tracks.”

Such materials are regularly churned out by the US media. The White House is not hiding its interest in increasing the pace and volume of export of the remaining grain from Ukraine. Clearly, by using these biased statements and “leaks” through the pet media, the US administration is seeking to push Russian exporters out of the global markets. This is nothing short of a smearing public relations strategy bordering on information-fuelled confrontation based on aggression coming from the all-too-well-known sources. Clearly, Washington believes that its anti-Russian fake claims will convince the third countries to switch to buying primarily Ukrainian agricultural products that are shipped abroad under the strict control of the West.

Based exclusively on humanitarian considerations of ensuring global food security, we supported UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’ well-known proposal on a package deal. The corresponding agreements - the Black Sea Initiative on exporting Ukrainian grain tied in with the Russia-UN Memorandum on normalising our agricultural exports - were signed in Istanbul on July 22, 2022.

However, the humanitarian initiative for Ukrainian grain was later reclassified as a commercial initiative, and more than half of the cargo went not to the countries in need (which the Western community cared about so much), but to the EU. I am aware that, based on the economic situation and financial performance, the EU countries may soon be among the needy countries, but they were still afloat back then. Under the cover of alleviating hunger, all exported grain went directly to the European Union and other developed countries. As it turned out, 70 percent of Ukrainian exports consist of feed grains and fodder crops.

As for our supplies of food and fertilisers to the global markets, despite all the declarations coming from Washington, Brussels or London about lifting sanctions on them, the supply of domestic products has so far remained, in fact, blockaded due to restrictions on banking transactions, access to ports, and ship freight and insurance.

Our proposal concerning the free transfer of Russian fertilisers that had been seized in the ports of Latvia, Estonia, Belgium and the Netherlands (262,000 tonnes, in all) is a case in point. Importantly, the issue is about free aid, which should not be subject to any sanctions whatsoever.

We care about global food security. We see it not as a theory or empty talk, but as human beings who need this food. We are doing everything to make sure they receive it (including fertiliser) free of charge.

When the West realised it couldn't hide or flip our message around, it came up with a programme of its own titled "Grain from Ukraine." An amazing story. Do you think the Kiev regime is donating its grain to countries in need? No. It's just another financial scheme: whoever wants to help these countries is supposed to buy grain from Kiev and then make it available to needy countries. It's a case of infernal fantasy that is hard to imagine. Hence, the question: if the West is willing to help countries in need, what stops it from giving them some money so that they themselves can buy what they need, be it grain, fertiliser, food, medicines, or other humanitarian supplies? Just give them the money. I am not going to drill deep into how many centuries the Western countries that are now so concerned (as they say) with the problems of the third world countries have been exploiting them. If you want to help, just do it with no strings attached. What's the snag? Give them the money and they will buy what they need and as much as they need from the seller of their choice. Why this absurd scheme? It's just because there is only one thing hiding inside - a political cover for financial fraud. A classic of the genre for the West.

Despite the fact that we came up with this initiative in early September and asked top officials from the UN and WFP to support our efforts, the first batch of fertiliser (20,000 tonnes) was sent from the Netherlands to Malawi only on November 28. Is that how Amsterdam, Brussels and Washington care for the needy? It took them several months to unblock what we wanted to just give away.

For our part, we have repeatedly reaffirmed our readiness to fulfil our humanitarian and commercial obligations regarding food and fertiliser supplies. From May to September, we exported over 10 million tonnes of food (70 percent of wheat), mainly to Asia (62 percent) and Africa (34 percent), as well as about 9 million tonnes of fertiliser. We are prepared to bring these numbers to 30 million tonnes of grain by the end of the year, and eventually reach 50 million tonnes with account taken of the harvest, plus 25 million tonnes of fertiliser.

This will not only stabilise prices on the international markets, which everyone (including the UN) is so concerned about, and resolve the problem of

affordability, but it will also prevent a physical shortage crisis, primarily shortage of fertilisers, which is much more important. The only challenge is to overcome unilateral sanctions, which the Westerners continue to tighten thus making things worse for the developing and needy countries.

Shall we tell the truth? Everyone in the West is concerned about how many hungry mouths there are on this planet. They choose which ones should be fed and which (after genetic tests to determine impurities) can go without food. That is why they do not let us supply our food, which we are willing to donate to the countries of Africa and Asia. They don't want the people there to stay alive? Are they bothering them or do they think they are not human beings? Well, historically they were second-grade humans for them and today they are third-grade humans.

We have repeatedly made it clear and we want people in Africa and Asia to hear us: despite the obstacles placed by the West, we are willing and will fulfil our obligations to make sure that our food and fertiliser reach your countries, the people are fed and have the opportunity to use everything they need to develop their agricultural industries. It is extremely hard to do this without fertilisers. I know that we will be heard, despite all the buzz and noise created by Western media to cover up Washington's hate-fuelled efforts.

International experts have become increasingly vocal about the fact that food inflation is rooted in a "skewed" global economy and systemic errors and setbacks in the macroeconomic, energy and food policies of the major Western economies. Climate cataclysms, the pandemic and wide-ranging anti-Russia unilateral sanctions exacerbated these negative trends and the process causing imbalance in the global market, primarily the agricultural product market. High energy prices that stem from Western policies and their push to accomplish an accelerated energy transition to renewable sources have led to a transport tariff crisis. The cost of fertilisers has tripled since 2020 (by 80 percent between 2018 and 2021). You will never know about this if you only read US newspapers. It doesn't fit into their picture of the world. Look at least at the UN data, which can still be found in the US information paradigm. They have not been cut out from the network. The price hike is due to volatile natural gas prices, which account for up to 80 percent of the fertiliser production costs, and restrictive measures imposed on Russia. Is there anyone who is unaware of that? Not only a first-year student of the Economics Department of an average university will be aware of it, but even schoolchildren will be well aware of it. They have been told for decades on end that energy costs underlie the production of goods. Who is to blame for the current situation in the global energy industry?

Russia continues to responsibly and conscientiously fulfil its obligations under international contracts regarding exports of agricultural products, fertiliser, energy and other critical supplies. We are aware of the importance of the socially significant supplies, including food, for the socioeconomic well-being of Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, the achievement of food security indicators and sustainable development goals.

Nord Stream update

This may sound boring, but I wonder what is going on with the Nord Stream pipelines. How is the investigation progressing? In the past, everything was decided very quickly: Novichok, chemical agents and the connection to the Kremlin. What went wrong this time? It's been taking too long. Have they found nobody to pin the crime on? Or are they mastering the courage to blame it on us?

We continue to closely monitor the situation with the Danish and Swedish investigations into the explosions on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines.

The Danish and Swedish authorities have stubbornly refused to cooperate with Russia on this case, even though Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has sent an official request for this. What does this mean? There is only one explanation: they are afraid of such cooperation, because the world would learn what they have been doing all these years, what this has led to, and who stands behind the manipulations on the global energy markets. And an absolute majority of countries will call on the West to account for what it has been doing for centuries. That is why they are doing their best to withhold this information from their citizens, from Europe, Russia and humanity as a whole.

We will continue fighting for a comprehensive and open investigation with the involvement of the Russian authorities and Gazprom. We believe that only on these terms can the investigation results be reliable and unbiased. The Danish and Swedish authorities and Brussels will not suppress the truth. It has been proved that no matter how hard they try to make up stories or hire spin doctors to do this for them, to destroy or plant fake evidence, they will not succeed. The truth will out. This is how it has always been.

A hundred years ago, it took decades for truth to be revealed. According to the criminal Western logic, they could hope that the perpetrators would not live to see the day of their shame. But Colin Powell did. He regretted it for years, for he had been duped to hold up that vial at the UN Security Council and to tell tall stories about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Colin

Powell has shown the world what such machinations can lead to and how difficult it is to live with that shame. He has died and will be remembered for that shameful action. The same will happen now if the West opts to keep the truth from the international community.

Western accusations against Russia in connection with unprecedentedly high energy prices

Using the media under its control, the West is accusing Russia of causing the high energy prices. In fact, this is due to the Western countries' short-sighted, misguided and inconsistent macroeconomic and energy policy and a politically motivated course seeking to cut off energy supplies from Russia.

Macroeconomic policy is not "homework" for tomorrow, but a global view of the processes and forecasting them based on one's own interests for decades to come. However, with regard to, for example, climate, the US changes its position approximately once every few years to a diametrically opposite one and not just in the context of ideology as a philosophical concept, but as doctrinal documents that are codified in law. At some point, the Americans are part of the Paris climate agreement and next thing you know they are out and then back again.

What kind of macroeconomic planning in the United States and internationally are we talking about if Washington is one of the largest industrial players? How is it possible at all, if the position is reversed, not in order to adjust "to the prevailing wind," and not to adapt to the situation "on the ground," but based on the political guidelines of a particular party or the current tenant of the White House? A competitor cannot be hurt politically, unless his concept is debunked, and an opposite one is made up and implemented.

Look at what is happening now with the liberal part of US politics, which has always been committed to the green transition. They are now crossing out their own work. Greta Thunberg was made a symbol in a crude scheme where the child was used to push through their concepts and put them into practice. Now, she has been written off. She is now saying something on the fringes of society or in small professional communities. That's all. Notably, the same people are sitting in the UN (where she was invited a few years ago to speak from the bully pulpit), at the White House (who discovered her and gave her to the world), and there are still the same film and music stars (who let her endlessly wallow in the rays of their popularity). All these people are alive and doing well. The only thing that has changed is the beneficiary and the political

conjuncture. There's no more Greta with her vision and foreknowledge.

If we do an unbiased analysis of the global energy paradigms, we will see that natural gas prices surged back in 2021 when they went from \$200 to \$1,950 per cubic metre. The price of oil also increased by 50 percent in 2021. According to our estimates, this price hike resulted from fluctuations in demand caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, flooding the economy (primarily the US economy) with cheap money (they mass printed coupons that could be "redeemed" and issued unsecured means of payment to minimise the aftermath of the pandemic), and a sharp drop in investment in the oil and gas sector that started in 2017 and was driven by rampant renewable energy subsidies. Multiple conferences were held, start-up companies were incorporated, and enormous numbers of experts, lured by Western grants, were trying to talk private investors, corporations, and entire countries into investing in renewable energy. This matter was widely covered in magazine articles. An information environment was created to leverage decision-makers.

Brussels openly stated its plans to stop buying Russian energy back when the EU energy packages were drafted and adopted. Illegitimate, unilateral and Ukraine-related restrictions on Russia's energy sector did nothing but exacerbate the situation. Now it has come to abandoning market principles in this area. It looks as if insane people have taken over this sector and are frantically hitting the accelerator and brake pedals. The global energy system is absolutely unbalanced. They are making frenzied efforts to try to explain what is going on. They keep saying the same thing over and over again: Russia is to blame for everything. After all, there are independent (but sponsored by the West) institutions that compile reports rife with numbers. Go ahead and put them on your desk. This situation has been in the works over many years now.

Volatile energy prices are a direct consequence of the West's deliberate decision to make energy part of political confrontation with Russia (and Europe), which Moscow has consistently opposed. When looking for answers to questions about what caused the energy crisis, it is important to remain objective and be guided by numbers rather than political slogans and be honest, at least with oneself.

EU price cap on Russian seaborne oil in force from December 5

We have repeatedly stated that capping Russian oil prices is an anti-market and unnatural measure. This is not just a matter of non-compliance with

agreements or laws. Never again will the current Western political elites find the strength to return to the legal fold. They have become totally unhinged, acting with complete impunity and violating those same legal norms they have helped write. Their anti-market policy is going to disrupt supply chains and could significantly complicate the situation in global energy markets. Can you finally take note of Russia's approach, something we have been airing for more than a month? And later tell them that Russia has warned them. Our country will not supply oil to countries that support this provocative anti-Russia initiative.

Any price dictates or buyers' cartels set an extremely dangerous precedent for international trade.

Quite a few independent countries are opposed to this measure for a reason. These are not pocket states subsidised by the ideologists of the price capping philosophy, ready to come out at any moment and support any kind of decision, even a suicidal one, on receiving a call from Washington. I am referring to independent players, which are pursuing their own domestic and foreign policy. They are in a position to say what they really think, not the way the collective West prefers to put it. These countries have been opposing this decision and pointing out the costs the world will incur. Is anyone in the West interested? No. Too late – they have slammed on the accelerator and the brakes at the same time.

Why have countries, which largely prefer to stay out of political battles, spoken out openly? Because they realise that this stratagem is being directed against Russia today, but it can be applied to any other state tomorrow, for political or other reasons. A group of countries might sit down and decide to set the price of pineapples. The people who grow pineapples might ask why. Well, because “they” decided so.

They keep saying that Russia is pursuing an aggressive policy. But former German Chancellor Angela Merkel told us how it really was. They have been pumping weapons into Ukraine to prepare it for conflict. But they remain blind to the real side of history.

Apparently, the initiators of this measure, in pursuit of their goals, do not fully realise the scale of the damage it will cause, not only to energy markets, but also to the entire global economy. It is not an abstract concept. It is about the lives of people, nations, countries, not sheets of paper.

But the people who are supposed to ensure respect for the rule of law and the balance of interests in Europe, are kept in the background, while key posts are occupied by ignorant people who don't know where the seas are in relation to the countries with which they border, where different countries are or what are

they called. And these people are authorised to make geopolitical and geostrategic decisions, without even a basic knowledge of geography. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock thinks that countries are separated by “hundreds of thousands of kilometres.” Oil? Gas? She’s been given a few political guidelines and quotes, and she follows them, while occasionally participating in some PR projects. She must be completely clueless to say such things. What’s the point of this? What kind of realistic view of the situation can such people have?

Summit for Democracy 2023

The United States has announced that it will hold a second Summit for Democracy. We expressed our opinion during preparations for the first summit, but it appears that we need to repeat our arguments.

The first summit was held in December 2021 under the pretext of rallying all countries to protect democracy across the world. In fact, it was used to aggressively promote neo-liberal values by replacing democracy with democratism, which is the unlimited power of the elites under democratic institutions that are merely formal. At the same time, attempts are being made to create a broad anti-Russia and anti-China front based on ideology.

They change their positions towards China every two or three months. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has recently held a news conference on cooperation, engagement and interaction with China. Several months ago, he issued a doctrine on the Chinese threat. How can you explain this?

Needless to say, such “summits” only fuel international tensions and actually draw new dividing lines, splitting the world into “friends” and “foes,” stigmatising countries, pinning them down with labels, and enforcing a “rules-based order.” We keep asking where we can read these rules. The answer is nowhere. They are invented on the go. Is this the “new world order” from the phrase (*Novus ordo seclorum*) on the US dollar bill? Are we entering the age of a new world order? If this is the case, they should have said so. This could have clarified the matter.

The new US undertaking is based on the old neo-colonial approach to foreign policy taken to a new level. To begin with, they hypocritically assess the “quality of democracy.” It turns out that democracies can be of different quality. They are telling us that there can be different democracies. No, not different stages of historical development or different traditions and cultures, but different qualities of democracy. That’s rich coming from the United States, given its

problems in all areas, from the freedom (or lack thereof) of speech to human rights or their absence. As for the US election system, even the OSCE has grown tired of turning a blind eye to what its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reports from the United States. Do I need to remind you about corruption there? The issue of Afghanistan says a lot. We have provided relevant facts on many occasions. They are available, in part, in the Foreign Ministry statement of December 1, 2021.

Second, the countries that took part in the first summit were solicited to adopt decisions on democracy and human rights that suited the United States and its minions and were formulated as “voluntary commitments.” Yes, such things happen. According to our formula, we accept the commitments we ourselves formulate. But their formula is to tell other countries what pledges they must regard as their “voluntary commitments.” It is notable that the assessment and monitoring of compliance with these “voluntary commitments” are delegated to Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs). I believe the abbreviation should be reduced to WOs, “Western organisations,” just to clarify the matter. Why “non-governmental”? We know that they are funded from governmental sources, so why not reduce it to WOs, to everyone’s satisfaction? The West is financing the organisations that will inspect countries across the world for compliance with the “voluntary commitments” they were forced to make. This actually amounts to interfering in the internal affairs of states through “tame” organisations under the pretext of protecting democratic values. We see the creation of a thoroughly cynical mechanism. In the past, the West acted as the centre, using different methods in different countries. Today they are creating a single mechanism for that through these “summits for democracy.” We will see US-led systemic interference in the internal affairs of states. They are planning to create a mechanism that will cover the world as a whole.

We are aware of Washington’s goals. It wants to erode the system of international law where every state was equal before international law. It is playing with loaded dice to get competitive advantages over others, gain leverage over the individual countries’ domestic policy and the ability to censor the information space, and so on. We detect an urge to force states to toe Washington’s line on the pain of political or economic pressure and blackmail. Taken together, this is a flagrant infringement of the main principle of international law made with a view to destroying it altogether. The principle of equality and self-determination of nations is being erased. That principle, which stipulated the free choice of nations’ development paths, is being replaced with a system of governance with “rules,” a “mechanism” for assessing democracy and

issuing “recipes” to those who need to “upgrade” their democracy to the necessary level.

To really deal with current problems, our foreign colleagues should stop “spreading democracy,” creating new dividing lines and building a world that would only suit Western interests. These attempts have never come to any good. We believe that the world must resume compliance with international law and recognise in practice the principle of the sovereign equality of states, which has been sealed in the UN Charter and constitutes the basis of a truly democratic world order.

The 35th anniversary of the INF Treaty

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) was signed 35 years ago on December 8, 1987. In accordance with its provisions, Moscow and Washington committed not to manufacture, test or deploy ground-based ballistic or cruise missiles with a range of 500 km to 5500 km and their launchers. As a result of implementation of the Treaty, two classes of nuclear weapons have disappeared from the countries’ arsenals, which was a weighty contribution to strengthening international security and strategic stability. It was also a significant practical step towards nuclear disarmament in the context of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT Treaty).

Notably, the signing of the INF Treaty marked the final resolution of the “Euromissile crisis” of the 1980s and was an outstanding example of a mutually beneficial political and diplomatic settlement of the most acute international security issue of that time. I think this example and experience remain relevant to this day.

The INF Treaty was of unlimited duration and could ensure predictability and restraint in the missile sphere for many years to come. It had the necessary margin of safety to deliver on that promise. Accordingly, it is regrettable that the INF Treaty ceased to exist in August 2019 as a result of the destructive policy of the United States, which withdrew from the treaty under a far-fetched pretext. This came as a yet another link in a series of Washington’s targeted actions to destroy the arms control agreements that stood in its way. As a result, a vacuum has emerged in the international legal regulation of an entire segment of nuclear missile weapons, which involves additional security risks.

The fact that these risks may become direct threats can be seen from Washington actively implementing a wide range of destabilising programmes to create ground-based INF missiles to be deployed around the world. Clearly,

these actions will significantly undermine regional and global security. They will also trigger further missile proliferation and a new round of the arms race, which our countries managed to avoid 35 years ago.

By the way, it was reported just the other day that the US ground forces had obtained a prototype of a new medium-range system with a full set of ground equipment, including four launchers. This is the second system of this class that was made available to the US troops for the personnel training purposes.

Clearly, Russia will not turn a blind eye to the emergence of new missile risks. Nevertheless, we are still adhering to the moratorium on deploying ground-based INF missiles, which we have unilaterally announced, until US-made weapons of similar classes appear in the respective regions. If this happens, we will have to act quickly and energetically in order to respond to emerging threats to our security.

At this point, we state that Washington continues its destabilising and futile pursuit of military superiority. This approach is fraught with enormous danger for the United States and the world at large. Hopefully, the anniversary of the signing of the INF Treaty will give our US colleagues a motive to realise this simple truth and to draw the necessary conclusions.

Statements by Polish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Zbigniew Rau on the OSCE principle of consensus

The Polish OSCE chairmanship has made history, but the colour of the letters is yet to be determined because Poland did unprecedented things during its term.

On December 2, Polish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Zbigniew Rau said at the final press conference of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Lodz that the organisation would be unable to continue without reviving the principle of consensus. Really? The OSCE will be unable to continue without reviving the principle of consensus? I have to ask the Polish chairperson-in-office if the OSCE should be dissolved in this case, because it has destroyed that principle. It has been working consistently and for a long time to destroy it, victimising international law and the high ideals and standards formulated by those who created the OSCE as a negotiating platform. And you say now that the organisation cannot live without that principle? Have you pronounced it dead?

It is true that consensus is the underlying principle of the OSCE, sealed in

its founding documents. The rule of consensus prevents the enforcement of anything on Russia or any other member state. This is the essence of consensus. What have you been doing all these years? In plain English, consensus is when you cannot push any one opinion through by enforcing it on all the parties. Consensus is not when everybody thinks the same thing. That is called unanimity. Consensus is when the parties, which can have similar or diametrically opposite and even irreconcilable opinions, find common ground for dialogue in order to find a common denominator. It is not a “rules-based order,” total lawlessness or the use of machinations for attaining one’s goals. Yes, it takes time and effort to hammer out a decision based on consensus. It is a complicated process. But this means that such decisions will be implemented, which is why the parties demonstrate their willpower and resolve to overcome differences. They demonstrate their willpower, and then they implement the common will.

Throughout its chairmanship, Poland has been trying to show everyone that the OSCE can exist very well without respecting the principle of consensus. The Poles strained to reduce to naught the OSCE potential that took many years to create. They knowingly abandoned the principles of equal dialogue based on mutual respect and constructive efforts. Warsaw has not even tried to launch talks on a single draft decision submitted to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Lodz.

This explains the result. It has become clear to everyone at the Ministerial Council (including the Poles) that abandoning the principle of consensus is leading the organisation down a blind alley. There can be – no, there are organisations that operate according to different rules. But the operating rules of this organisation were formulated decades ago.

We proposed adopting an OSCE Charter. We believe that this will make the organisation a comprehensive and effective structure, rather than just a discussion platform. Nobody in the West supported our initiative. They liked the organisation as it was. They believed that they would be able to continue pushing their ideas through, because the Warsaw Pact and the opposing systems ceased to exist. The majority of the former Warsaw Pact countries joined the positions of the collective West. And so, they believed that they would call the shots, shout us down and find a way to push their decisions through.

None of the heads of delegations at the Ministerial Council suggested cancelling the rule of consensus. It may be good that Warsaw has seen the value of this fundamental rule, despite the arrogance and grandstanding it showed in its involvement, or rather non-involvement in the OSCE work during its

chairmanship.

UN Internet Governance Forum

Further attempts by the United States and its supporters to consolidate their dominant position on the internet at the 17th UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Addis Ababa on November 28 – December 2 this year were unsuccessful.

Developing countries have rallied against large Western companies' attempts to retain influence on information flows. The uncontrolled and lawless moderation of online content practiced by transnational corporations, which block the accounts of media outlets, public figures and other users in violation of people's rights and freedoms, the dominance of misinformation and fake content, and the promotion of a political agenda – participants at the forum criticised such actions, describing them as a threat to the security of states.

Most countries' delegations agreed that the only way to counteract the dominance of monopolies from developed countries (I would say, those developed countries are rapidly deteriorating) is to increase the role of states in internet governance. This is something the United States fears because it would mean losing control over the internet. If this happens, each state will be able to protect its own information landscape from propaganda and false values imposed by the West. This would also deal a blow to the “rules-based international order,” to the export of democracy, to their interference in the domestic and foreign policies of sovereign states.

It is revealing that the controversial Declaration for the Future of the Internet the Americans were promoting, which its authors arrogantly presented as a new guideline for all states to follow, left the participants unenthusiastic. On the other hand, the sessions hosted by the Russian delegation, analysing specific Western fake stories, aroused much interest at the forum. And so did our principled call for an expeditious implementation of the decisions on the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted at WSIS 2005, which says all states should have an equal role and responsibility for international internet governance.

We widely promoted this approach in contacts with foreign delegations. We agreed to jointly defend it during the next Internet Governance Forum in 2023.

UN General Assembly's resolution on sports

On December 1, during the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, a resolution “Sport as an enabler for sustainable development” was adopted by consensus. The Russian Federation, which has steadily and consistently advocated the development of international sports cooperation that fully meets the Olympic spirit and principles, as usual co-sponsored the text with its partners from 90 UN member states.

The resolution emphasises the role of sport in ensuring social development, its indisputable importance in maintaining health in societies, and popularising a healthy lifestyle. Sport is also an important factor in international cooperation in a spirit of peace, understanding and friendship.

We hope that the vote by all UN member states that unanimously supported this resolution will remind representatives of the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees, who are openly and cynically using sport as a tool of pressure, unfair competition and discrimination, of sport’s important unifying role, its importance in the development of each state, and of the true Olympic ideals.

Developments in Peru

We are closely following the developments in Peru, where on December 7 the Parliament expressed a vote of no confidence in President Pedro Castillo and removed him from office following aggravation of the internal political crisis.

We hope that the transit of power in Peru will proceed calmly within the legal framework, without destructive interference from outside, and will contribute to the normalisation of the situation in the country in the interests of the Peruvian people.

Russia reaffirms its desire to further develop the traditionally friendly bilateral relations.

Days of Spiritual Culture of Russia in France

Russian culture in all historical epochs has been a symbol of Russia. Its uniqueness was not only demonstrated to the world by the works of prominent authors, musicians and scientists, such as Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and Dmitry Shostakovich, but by the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the multiethnic peoples of Russia.

Days of Spiritual Culture of Russia is a landmark event held abroad with a

genuine response from a sincerely feeling and experiencing audience. Early December saw the conclusion of the Days of Spiritual Culture of Russia in France, organised by the Russian Ministry of Culture with the support of our Embassy at the Russian Spiritual and Cultural Orthodox Centre in Paris.

The spectators were treated to a show by the Vladimirskiye Rozhechniki and the Khokhloma Russian Song and Dance Ensemble, who demonstrated musical horn playing and the art of throat singing. The concert by folklore bands, which showed the unique identity of the Russian regions, was warmly welcomed by the local French audience as well as tourists. This is especially significant in the Year of the Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of Russia.

Other events successfully held in France in 2022 included a conference on strengthening inter-Christian dialogue (February), a concert of young performers from the St Petersburg House of Music, events to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of outstanding musician, composer and conductor Sergei Rachmaninoff (July, October), an exhibition about Galina Ulanova, “The soul of movement – the movement of the soul” (September-October).

Heroes of the Fatherland Day

On December 9, Russia is marking Heroes of the Fatherland Day. On this day, the country honours Heroes of the Soviet Union, Heroes of the Russian Federation, holders of the Order of Saint George and the Order of Glory. The Russian Federation marked Heroes of the Fatherland Day for the first time on December 9, 2007.

The holiday date coincides with the day of Christian Saint and Holy Martyr George the Victorious. On December 9 (November 26 Julian calendar), 1769, Empress Catherine the Great instituted the Order of Saint George, the top Russian military award. The order was conferred on soldiers for displaying particular valour in battle. Over 10,000 people received the Order of Saint George, 25 people were awarded the top-class order, and ten received all four classes. Mikhail Kutuzov, Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, Ivan Paskevich of Erivan and Ivan Diebitsch-Zabalkansky were also awarded all four classes of the order.

In 1807, the Saint George Cross, a badge of distinction for junior ratings, was instituted, and it became one of the most revered military awards and decorations. The contemporary Saint George ribbon also dates to that period.

All holders of Saint George orders and crosses were honoured prior to the

Revolution of 1917. The holiday was abolished following the Great October Socialist Revolution, and the order was replaced with new awards and decorations. On April 16, 1934, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union instituted the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for collective and individual achievements before the state. Eight diplomats, Heroes of the Soviet Union, including Alexey Azarov, Andrey Bolotov, Alexey Yepishev, Viktor Kazakov, Sergey Romanovtsev, Fyodor Sadchikov, Yakov Susko and Ivan Fyodorov, worked at the Foreign Ministry. Nikolai Bulychov, holder of all three classes of the Order of Glory, also worked for the Foreign Ministry.

The title Hero of the Russian Federation continues the traditions of the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Since 1992, over 600 defenders of the Fatherland, have received the title of Hero of the Russian Federation. This includes service personnel who were awarded this title for their peace-time exploits.

In 2000, the President of the Russian Federation signed his executive order reinstating the Order of Saint George as the top military award. The reinstated Order of Saint George is an exact replica of its predecessor, instituted during the reign of Catherine the Great. The Executive Order of the President of the Russian Federation, dated September 7, 2010, approved a new status of this order.

Each December, the Saint George Hall of the Moscow Kremlin hosts an official reception. Heroes of the Soviet Union, Heroes of the Russian Federation, holders of all classes of the Order of Glory and holders of the Saint George Order, members of the Government, representatives of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and public associations, cultural celebrities, scientists and artists attend the event.

In the past few years, various Russian regions have been hosting all kinds of events marking Heroes of the Fatherland Day and honouring the long history of the Russian Armed Forces.

Yes, we lived in peace some time ago. Today, our Fatherland and the entire world are in danger, and our soldiers are now defending the right to peace, life and the future with weapons in hand. I want them to know that we are working here as if they are standing behind our backs, watching and asking us every day whether we are doing everything possible to help them. Yes, this is exactly how we are working. I want the heroes who are now defending this country and, in effect, the entire planet to know this.

Answers to media questions:

Question: Despite the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation, the authorities of Lithuania decided to remove six steles at the biggest memorial cemetery in honour of soldiers killed in the Great Patriotic War. Can you comment on this?

Maria Zakharova: This is yet another example of the lawlessness, immorality and degradation of the West.

The entire Baltic area has been swept by a wave of destruction aimed at the Soviet memorial heritage (Soviet in this case). The essentially neo-Nazi regimes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are trying to settle historical accounts with Russia and delete the people's memory about the sacred war and the Great Victory. They couldn't care less even about the recommendations of the UN and other international agencies.

We are exposing the criminal actions by the Baltic states both in the bilateral and multilateral formats. I am referring not to the people of these states but to the regimes and those that are fulfilling these obviously immoral instructions.

Many residents of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are indignant at their authorities' barbarous decisions but are afraid to express their position in public due to unprecedented reprisals against dissidents in the Baltic states. This is what "democracy" is like there.

I heard recently that a public figure representing the culture of one Baltic state questioned why we were so worried about the monuments because they were not located in Russia. Okay, give this official seal. Just put it in writing: "we are doing what we want." Admit that Latvia has no standards of civilisation; that it can shut down any media and demolish monuments at will because this is what its regime thinks is right. Say this honestly. Nobody protests about such actions in the centre of Europe. We consider this a manifestation of immorality. We cannot but protest against what we see.

If some figures who consider themselves cultural figures do not understand to whom these monuments were erected I will remind them. I suggest they read a history book before talking about such subjects and wondering why these monuments are there. These people gave up their lives for such people as you not to be killed in gas chambers and not to be burned alive in villages. They wanted your children, who were born only thanks to them, not to be used for experiments and not to live in a ghetto.

I will remind civilised Europe that there were ghettos in the centre of Europe where people with yellow badges were driven. They were segregated according to the shape of their nose and ears. They gave up their lives for you to

live your life and be happy. Soviet soldiers left their families and sacrificed their lives for you. These monuments were built to prevent you (who do not remember either your own or global history) from becoming completely dehumanised. These monuments are like an eyesore to you because they make you think and recall who you were and whom you swore allegiance to then. Now you are trying to demolish them. Don't even try. We will preserve this historical memory and remind you what you could have been and what you were, having now sworn allegiance to fascist and current neo-Nazi regimes and proved to be misanthropic. It is not up to you to remove these monuments. Those who ruin monuments to people who sacrificed their lives for the future of others will be cursed by the people, in their own countries as well.

Did you ask your veterans' permission to do this? Go to their graves and ask them in silence: "Can we turn into barbarians in the 21st century?" Will they give you this permission? Monuments stood in the Baltic states as long as the veterans were alive. They knew who brought them life and cherished the historical memory. When practically all the veterans died, the rotten part of society, calling itself "the liberal public" raised its head. They didn't dare do that before because children from death camps and Nazi-abducted children were still alive (including those in the Baltic countries). Otherwise, these "liberals" would have been destroyed; ousted from society. Nobody would shake their hand. The generations that testified to crimes by the fact of their existence were gone. That's when they began to demolish monuments – not earlier.

Question: EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell visited a training camp for Ukrainian military personnel in Poland and made several bellicose statements. What can you say about that?

Maria Zakharova: I have commented on some of that earlier. This trip was accompanied by yet another falsehood about the situation in the SMO zone, cooked up the EU.

Josep Borrell's statements go to show once again that militarism is gaining the upper hand and suppressing any and all attempts at making sound assessments or diplomatic efforts. As we see, militarism is reigning supreme in Brussels. It is about flooding the Kiev regime with weapons, making statements and visiting the troops. Apparently, they believe that this is the best path forward for them to ensure their or the Kiev regime's victory (which they keep talking about) "on the battlefield."

We remain confident that realists understand the illusory nature of these hopes. However, clearly, with these statements and actions, the EU will pave the

road to more casualties and destruction caused by the Ukrainian forces' artillery and missile fire. The Ukrainian militants' targeted attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Donetsk on December 6 came as a tragic confirmation. At least seven civilians died and more than 20 were wounded. The head of European diplomacy didn't say a word about that. These people were civilians whereas he, as a diplomat, sides with the gunmen. You are aware of that. For precisely eight years the Westerners didn't see what was happening in the DPR and the LPR.

Through the efforts of its current leaders, the once peaceful economic Euro project has become a military and financial tool for implementing the US and NATO's geopolitical plans. A year ago we said that the EU was becoming NATO's economic "department." Now, it is on its way to becoming a military-political and financial division of the alliance. We didn't hear a word about peaceful settlement in Ukraine from Josep Borrell this time, either. As a diplomat, all he can talk about is war. He probably doesn't need to wear a suit. Since he put on the military fatigues, he can continue walking around like that for everyone to see what diplomacy is busy with in Brussels.

Question: On December 1, the Parliament of Moldova approved amendments to the Electoral Code. From now on, ballot papers will be issued only in Romanian. Previously, they were published in Russian as well. Can you comment on this decision?

Maria Zakharova: Changing the electoral legislation is an internal affair of any country, including the Republic of Moldova. However, it should be clearly understood that the draft law you mentioned - it has not yet entered into force, as far as we know - impacts the interests of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of Moldova.

As a reminder, about 80 percent of the people in that country speak more or less fluent Russian and over 220,000 people have Russian citizenship. Has anyone considered this information? Many members of the Moldovan expat community - there are about half a million of them in Russia - speak Russian. According to the Moldovan CEC, 746,000, or 21 percent of the 3.5 million ballots in the early parliamentary elections held in July 2021 were in Russian.

Hopefully, this new resolution, which was adopted only by the deputies from the Action and Solidarity party, will not prejudice the Russian-speaking population's electoral rights, and the stated goal of the draft law - "eliminating ambiguities and differences between the Electoral Code and other laws" - will not lead to the Russians being pushed out of the electoral process and narrowing the scope of use of the Russian language.

As you may recall, in the autumn of 2020, then presidential candidate Maia Sandu, a Romanian national, said that if she won, she would spare no effort to ensure proper status of the Russian language. She urged people not to believe rumours claiming that after her election, the rights of the Russian-speaking population would be infringed upon. It turns out she was lying. Less than a month after her inauguration, these promises were broken. The Constitutional Court of Moldova declared unconstitutional the law On the Functioning of the Languages in the Republic of Moldova, which reinstated the Russian language as the language of interethnic communication. We are now witnessing a new phase where the Russian language may disappear from the ballots. Unfortunately, international agencies will turn a blind to it as usual. Let's not listen to the stories that this is about the separation of the branches of power in Moldova. We call upon the Moldovan leadership to show common sense and refrain from taking action that could aggravate the already tense situation in the republic and be detrimental to bilateral relations with Russia.

Question: The foreign media publishes stories implying that Russia was involved in mailing packages with explosives to various agencies in Spain. Why are they spreading this information and on what grounds?

When will the narrative that Russia is to blame for everything become obsolete? Where else will they find another Russian connection?

Maria Zakharova: We will provide official comments after obtaining solid facts. We have evidence that Ukrainian citizens and people linked with that country are sending parcels and are engaged in direct threats, blackmail and elements of extremist activity with regard to Russian embassies.

If someone is interested in Western opinions on this issue, I can provide them with telephone numbers and addresses from which Russian officials, colleagues and I personally receive such threats. Russian embassies in EU countries are under siege by forces linked with Ukraine. When Western media outlets or politicians discuss this issue, they will have to provide evidence of what people linked with Ukraine are doing. We have more than enough of this evidence.

Question: After completing his visit to the United States, President of France Emmanuel Macron noted the need for dialogue with Russia and security guarantees for this country. Can you comment on this statement?

Maria Zakharova: I am tired of commenting on various words, and I want to comment on actions instead. We will comment on specific actions filled with real content, if any. People are uttering so many words, and they run counter to

each other to such an extent that it is pointless to dwell on them.

This is a wonderful idea, but its practical aspects remain unclear.

Question: According to the State Department, the United States is not enabling or encouraging Ukraine to deliver air or missile strikes beyond its borders. Does the Foreign Ministry trust these statements? Can you comment please?

Maria Zakharova: Russia has more than once put forth its position of principle that it is unacceptable for the West to deliver any type of weapon or any financial, material or technical, information or political sponsor support to the Kiev regime.

I would like to point out that the United States continues to encourage Kiev to fight to the end. They are talking about “victory on the battlefield” and saying that the time for talks has not yet come. They continue prodding the Kiev regime on, providing it with both material and public support. In addition to sending weapons and money, they are encouraging Kiev to win on the battlefield. You said that the US State Department is not encouraging Ukraine to deliver strikes outside its territory. How does this relate to their calls for victory on the battlefield? This is dichotomy, and an absolute contradiction between the two things.

Question: Russian representative Natalya Karmazinskaya said at the UN General Assembly that Moscow supported, in principle, the idea of creating a [nuclear safety and] security zone around the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant. According to the diplomat, it is necessary to coordinate the zone’s parameters so that this does not have a negative impact on its security or increase the threat of terrorist attacks. What parameters are these? What conditions has Russia advanced for such a zone?

Maria Zakharova: The main goal of such a zone is the guaranteed prevention of the plant being shelled by the Ukrainian armed forces. These attacks could lead to a man-made disaster with unpredictable consequences, as we have pointed out more than once. The Ukrainian authorities, goaded by their Western handlers and assured of their impunity, are cynically disregarding the presence of IAEA representatives at the plant.

According to available information, the Western media, in particular, Reuters, do not publish objective reports that condemn the shelling attacks by the Ukrainian forces. This has created a dangerous illusion in Kiev that it can act with impunity and that nobody is criticising it, which is only encouraging it to

commit new crimes. You yourself can improve the situation by publishing unbiased information.

As for the potential parameters of the zone, Russia is working on that. We will not publicly comment on them at this time. Hard work is underway at the level of experts.

Question: Reportedly, Washington wants to obstruct Russia's interaction with international organisations, including the G20, the International Organisation of Securities Commissions and some others. How will Russia respond?

Maria Zakharova: Brief comments on our stance have already been made public.

First, the United States should remind itself more often about how the G20 came into being. It was created after the United States brought the global economy down in the wake of its domestic real estate market crisis. It did not break out because of a man-made disaster or an emergency, but because the US real estate market turned out to be an enormous bubble with money just pouring in and rife with scams. When the bubble burst, the international exchanges imploded and economic ties were severed. As a result, the G20 was formed with the participation of major global economies and it was supposed to “save the world” from what was going on in the world through the fault of the United States.

Second, we consider the attempts to exclude Russia, or any other member country, from the G20 for political reasons, completely unacceptable. Moreover, the United States is now officially promoting this anti-Russia initiative as a strand of its state policy and has set aside funding from the budget for implementing it.

We regard this as Washington admitting its own impotence in this respect, since, over the course of the year, it was unable to secure majority support within the G20 on this issue through diplomatic means. The G20 summit was a success, and the member countries did not succumb to US provocations. It appears that Washington will now be funding the implementation of this idea.

We would like to point out that at present, excluding or isolating Russia is not being discussed at this venue at any level. Many participants, including Indonesia and India - the previous and current G20 chairs, respectively - consistently reject such actions by the United States and its allies and are against, in principle, any attempts to politicise the association or infringe on its individual members only to please the West's ambitions. Who's next? China?

They keep talking about China. Next thing you know they will be talking about excluding China from the G20. This is absurd. It's morbid logic that finds its reflection in geopolitics.

The Russian Federation continues to make a significant contribution to the G20's activities in all specialised areas of cooperation. Our delegation has made significant efforts to successfully negotiate and adopt the Leaders' Declaration following the G20 Bali Summit on November 15-16. Thanks, among other things, to this collective achievement, it has retained its importance as a key global governance forum.

One gets the impression that the United States, acting, on the contrary, in the interests of ratcheting up confrontation, simply wants to paralyse and strip this international format that is not accountable to it of legal capacity.

We hope that common sense will prevail and all our partners and "non-partners," including Washington, will leave political intrigues at the door and get down to work within the G20, that is, start looking for solutions to global socioeconomic challenges.

Question: Reportedly, Uzbekistan may withdraw from the "triple alliance." What would Moscow say to Uzbekistan turning down the idea of a gas union with Russia and Kazakhstan? Would Russia regret to see that happen? Will it pursue this union, but this time in a bilateral format with Kazakhstan?

Maria Zakharova: The information that Uzbekistan allegedly refused to participate in the tripartite gas union does not correspond to reality. This is what Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov made clear in a conversation with journalists.

Question: What can you say about Azerbaijan's attempt to block and take control of the only road between Armenia and Artsakh and other actions, in particular the requirements to monitor and inspect companies operating in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is a flagrant violation of the tripartite statement of November 9, 2020? What will Russia do to prevent this from happening?

Maria Zakharova: As far as we understand it, we are talking about the December 3 incident. The situation was addressed by the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent and, in cooperation with the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides, traffic along the Lachin corridor was promptly resumed.

Question: During his news conference on December 1, 2022, Minister Sergey Lavrov said that by recognising the Alma-Ata Declaration

of December 21, 1991, and the UN Charter as underlying a peace treaty, Armenia actually recognised that at that time, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was part of the Azerbaijani SSR, and that this facilitated further work and resolves the problem with the status of Karabakh. However, back then the Armenian parliament ratified that declaration with the reservation that Nagorno-Karabakh was not to be recorded as part of Azerbaijan. The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region had in fact seceded from the Azerbaijani SSR in full compliance with Soviet laws and at the time of signing the declaration, it was no longer part of Azerbaijan. Moreover, the Republic of Azerbaijan considers itself the legal successor to the First Republic of 1918-1920, and not to the Azerbaijani SSR. Considering all the above, I would like to ask why the right of peoples to self-determination is excluded from the current negotiation framework. The population of Artsakh is refusing to be part of Azerbaijan. Their right to self-determination is enshrined both in the UN Charter and in the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991. Why is it outside the scope of the negotiation process?

Maria Zakharova: I would like to clarify whether you have asked this well-worded question with solid legal references to the official representatives in Yerevan or the Armenian leadership?

Question: Opposition MPs have raised this issue.

Maria Zakharova: Let's not talk about opposition MPs, but specifically about you.

Question: I don't have the opportunity to ask them that question.

Maria Zakharova: I would like to note that media representatives from different regions in Russia and from other countries are joining us [online]. Please note that the authorities in Armenia are quite active on social media. Can you ask them this question? I mean, it primarily requires the formation of an official approach in Yerevan.

Sergey Lavrov dotted all the i's at the news conference on December 1. There is nothing more to add. That is why I suggest that you ask the Armenian authorities this question to find out their official stance on this subject.

Once we know their official stance, we will be able to hold a public discussion, taking into account all the nuances that you have mentioned. Without a unified position formalised publicly in Yerevan, it is difficult to add anything to Sergey Lavrov's explanations. We have heard many interpretations, nuances, various approaches to certain things of late. I would like to know Yerevan's

official view on the aspects mentioned; then we will be able to comment in detail.

Question: During his news conference, Sergey Lavrov also touched upon the OSCE Minsk Group. According to him, Washington and Paris officially stated that they would not cooperate with Russia anywhere or in any formats, that is, de facto announced the termination of the OSCE Minsk Group activities. However, after a nine-month pause, the 56th round of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the South Caucasus was held in Geneva on October 5, and Russia was part of it as well as the US and the EU. Is it possible to resume the work of the Minsk Group, considering? Why can Russia and the West conduct joint negotiations on Georgia, but not on Karabakh?

Maria Zakharova: The Minister gave a detailed assessment of the OSCE Minsk Group activities. As its co-chairs, Washington and Paris refused to cooperate with Moscow in February under a far-fetched pretext, thereby, actually burying this international platform. There's nothing more to add to that.

As for the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the South Caucasus, this platform operates under its co-chairs, the UN, the OSCE and the EU, while Washington is only one of the participants in the negotiations. In this regard, we consider it inappropriate to bracket these two formats together.

It would be worth noting that the destructive policy pursued by the West also manifested itself in the Geneva discussions. The format was resumed in October 2022, after a nine-month interruption. We gave our assessment of these events. The next, 57th round of the Geneva discussions, scheduled for December 2022 has already been postponed until February 2023.

Question: Since the start of this year, the leaders of the G7 and the European Union have been introducing sanctions, renouncing finished projects and raw material supplies and destabilising established ties. At the same time, the leading Western politicians and the media are blaming Moscow for all the energy problems. The latest examples are an oil price cap and an article by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz that describes hydrocarbons as weapons in Moscow's hands. What can you say about the Chancellor's "prose?"

Maria Zakharova: German officials make convulsive statements, blaming Russia for their accumulated energy problems, practically on a daily basis. I have said a lot about energy. To speak more specifically with regard to these

quotes, they show attempts by politicians in Berlin to somehow justify themselves to their compatriots, their voters, for the serious financial expenses that they have incurred because of their government's crude mistakes. The electricity and heating bills of ordinary Germans are enormous. Due to increased production costs, there is an unprecedented threat to the competitiveness of the German economy. Dozens of German companies are already thinking about fleeing the German market and transferring their plants to America. The US is the biggest beneficiary from the energy crisis in Germany, which was created by the country's own leaders. This is a complicated and practically critical situation in which Chancellor Scholtz and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck are trying to blame others for their own mistakes.

Obviously, they would like the Germans to forget overnight about their decision to reject nuclear and coal energy, to boycott the imports of Russia's pipeline oil and a price cap on it. One hand is doing something critical with respect to the German economy, while the other hand is reaching for a microphone to blame Russia for everything. They have forgotten about the sanctions against Russia's fuel-and-energy sector, which has been supplying the German economy with cheap energy resources for decades, and Berlin's silence after the subversive actions on the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines. The German authorities must be responsible for their actions.

Question: I have a question about the reformatting of international inter-regional ties that was discussed at the November 18 meeting of the Council of the Heads of Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation. What are the prospects for Russia's relations with North Korea? What could these relations accomplish with regard to the Primorye Territory and other regions?

Maria Zakharova: For the time being, it is difficult to make use of the potential of relations with the DPRK, including at the regional level due to its tough anti-Covid restrictions. We hope an easing of the anti-epidemic measures will create conditions allowing the restoration and further development of bilateral region-to-region ties.

Question: There are two main topics discussed in the US in connection with Russia's special operation in Ukraine. The first is that the US modified the range of rocket systems that it sent to Ukraine to make the weapons unable to reach Russia. What is your opinion on that?

Maria Zakharova: We have already repeatedly commented on this issue. No intra-American debates and gimmickry can cancel the fact that due to the

unlimited supply of military products to Kiev and the direct support of Ukraine's armed forces, including by providing them with real-time intelligence, the US has de facto become a party to the conflict in Ukraine.

Question: According to a new poll, the American people are getting increasingly uncomfortable about the support provided to Ukraine. Could you comment on that?

Maria Zakharova: The question about how people in the US feel should be addressed not to us, but to them and to those they vote for in order to feel comfortable.

Question: It is reported that there has been an attempted coup in Germany. Among the arrested was a Russian national and it is said that she was in consultations with the Russian Embassy in Germany. Could you comment on these developments?

Maria Zakharova: Was she supposed to stage a coup in Germany by herself? Or were there more people involved? Or once again, it all fell on a fragile woman?

On December 7, the official website of the German Prosecutor General's Office published news about the detention of 22 people on suspicion of planning a coup. There is a woman, a Russian national, among those arrested.

In this regard, the Russian Embassy in Berlin has promptly sent a request to the above-mentioned agency to get an explanation as to why a Russian national was detained. At the same time, the diplomatic mission is ready to provide her with consular and legal aid. It is also actively commenting on the developments.

As for an assessment of the events in general, the Russian party considers them to be solely an internal affair of Germany.

Question: The other day, EU officials failed to reach agreement on a new 2023 financial aid package for Ukraine worth about 18 billion euros. At the same time, following US-Australian talks in the 2+2 format in Washington, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the US side is focusing on continuing current actions and providing Ukraine with everything it needs for defence and for retaking the territories seized since February 24, 2022. Does this mean greater US-EU disagreements regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict? Could you comment on this?

Maria Zakharova: We regularly comment on this issue. As of late, Western countries have allocated multi-billion sums for "assisting" Ukraine. In effect, they are taking this money from rank-and-file Europeans who are

expecting support from their governments. At this briefing, there has already been a question about Germany and whether the United States is feeling uncomfortable. Of course, they take money from people time and again, for the mythical purposes of assisting the Kiev regime. These people are waiting for support from their own governments, but, instead, they are telling them to tighten their belts, to wear more clothes and to wash themselves less often because Vladimir Zelensky likes it that way.

It is necessary to “service” the Western-provoked financial, economic, energy and food crisis at the expense of their own population. All this incurs serious losses on the EU economy, due to illegitimate anti-Russia sanctions, speculation around and inside the energy sector. Every new package of anti-Russia sanctions will increase the negative effect.

EU assets linked with security programmes in other parts of the world are spent on assisting Kiev. Consequently, Europe is facing greater risks of terrorist and extremist activities, weapons smuggling, illicit drug trafficking, illegal migration and organised crime. The European Union is trying to support its actions with an active misinformation and propaganda campaign that aims to suppress objective information on the negative consequences of supporting the neo-Nazi Kiev regime, including for the security of the EU countries. The EU is therefore encouraging the feeling of impunity of the Ukrainian war criminals.

Although the EU is lavish with promises, it is allocating only a smaller share of the money, which reaches Kiev in the form of loans, and this is spent on the needs of the Kiev regime. However, the black hole of corruption and Ukrainian lawlessness swallow up most of the funds. If European taxpayers ever learn where their money has gone, this will only be from the new investigations into the offshore accounts of representatives of the current Ukrainian leadership. It is hardly surprising that the EU is finding it more difficult to agree on allocating new funds for assisting Ukraine.

Regarding your question about specific “voices,” the attempts of certain EU countries to state their national interests are suppressed and seen as dissent.

Question: Head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen warned America’s Inflation Reduction Act threatened to bring about a new trade war between the European Union and the United States. She said that this law might lead to unfair competition, market closure and the disruption of critically important supply chains that have passed the test of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to her, this law, if implemented, could allow the United States to siphon off investment and the supplies of rare earth resources, which the European Union critically needs, in

particular to continue developing alternative energy sources. How would you appraise her statement?

Maria Zakharova: Today we will prepare detailed material on this topic because this is really a “powerful” statement, given current developments. A comment on this issue will be posted on our website.

Question: In his interview with The Telegraph, Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Willie Walsh talked about the need to resume flights through Russian airspace. Are talks taking place on resuming flights, probably, on the principle of reciprocity?

Maria Zakharova: We have talked on more than one occasion about the sanctions deadlock, into which Western countries have driven themselves by imposing unilateral restrictions on Russia. We had to respond appropriately.

Our response was made public in a Rosaviatsia [the Federal Air Transport Agency] statement on February 28, 2022.

If suddenly there is progress along these lines, we will scrutinise our “partners” initiatives thoroughly.

I still recommend contacting Rosaviatsia for specific details.

Question: The French media have started releasing reports citing the French Foreign Minister, who believes that the EU monitoring mission in Armenia should be extended. The observers arrived [in Armenia] in October to stay for two months, so the mission’s mandate expires at the end of December. How does Moscow regard the EU’s desire to extend their mission in this South Caucasian republic? Was this issue discussed during contacts with Armenian and Azerbaijani colleagues?

Maria Zakharova: We are aware of Brussels’ aspiration to get involved, through the use of any instruments, in the process of normalising Baku-Yerevan relations, to build their presence on the ground and, ultimately, squeeze Russia out of the region. We have repeatedly talked about our attitude towards this.

Let us not anticipate events. There are different and sometimes opposite views, including among the South Caucasian countries, on the enhancing of the non-regional factor in the South Caucasus. We regularly discuss this topic, among other things, during our contacts with Azerbaijan and Armenia.

When and if a decision is taken to extend the EU monitoring mission on the Armenian side of the border between that country and Azerbaijan, we will issue a separate comment on this subject. As for now, everything testifies to the European Union being guided in its activities in the South Caucasus exclusively by its own current interests.

Question: Do you have any information about talks with the incumbent Kiev authorities or Western organisations?

Maria Zakharova: We comment on this topic regularly. Sergey Lavrov gave as explicit answer to this question as possible when speaking at the Primakov Readings International Forum yesterday, December 7.

Question: Could you comment on the information about Warsaw's plans for integrating Ukraine's western regions?

Maria Zakharova: I have not seen Warsaw's comments on this. Which Polish officials came up with these comments?

Question: Well, there is information like this...

Maria Zakharova: If there are any official reports on this, we would be able to refer to them. The current abundance of opposing opinions does not permit us to make an official comment. I did not see anything to this effect. If you have seen anything that could be commented on I am ready to consider it. However, unfortunately or fortunately, I cannot comment on all sorts of viewpoints or anonymous sources, or planted stories. Or else, if this were about us or our history, then I could have commented on this information; if Russia had been mentioned I could have confirmed whether that was true or not and would have been able to supply you with information. When you are talking about an approach that someone in Poland might take, give me some material and I will respond to it in my comment.



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